

(Optional props: party hat, streamer poppers, noise makers, etc.)

Well, today is a birthday celebration, so I guess this is the time for the presents.

In case you hadn't heard, we are having a birthday celebration today! If you listen to the scripture from Acts that we will hear in a few minutes, you will hear about how something brand new was happening—how the Holy Spirit came among the people and how that same Holy Spirit breathed such a new life into everyone there that they were changed and inspired! That gathering is what we now like to think of as “the birthday of the Church,” or as it is more officially called, the day of Pentecost.

Happy Birthday, Church! *(If you are using birthday party props, take a moment to celebrate!)*

There are so many ways of celebrating birthdays—parties, cake, hats and streamers--and, of course, gifts! We will be receiving the Pentecost offering today, and so everyone in the congregation is invited to give a gift to help support some marvelous ministries of the PC(USA)! Our gifts go to support:

- the “Educate a Child” initiative, which works and speaks up to improve education for children in the U.S. and around the world,
- the Presbyterian Youth Triennium, a once-every-three-years week of faith-filled community building for high schoolers *(if you sent youth and/or adults to this past summer's triennium, do note their names, and perhaps find a time in the service for them to share a bit about that experience)*,
- and the Young Adult Volunteer program, which places 19-30- year-olds as volunteers in communities in the U.S. and abroad *(as with Triennium, make note of any current or recent YAVs in your congregation)*.

All of these offerings support our church's work to teach and encourage children, youth and young adults. In fact, the theme of this year's Pentecost Offering from Psalm 71 ties beautifully with this, saying, “God, from my youth you have taught me” (Ps. 71:17). The Pentecost offering supports all of this teaching, and even more—our congregation will be able to use a portion of this offering locally *(If a recipient is known, share how it will be used)*.

When we are giving our gifts to the Church in the Pentecost offering, we, as the Church, are giving a gift back to the younger members of our faith community. We are teaching them, but we are also helping them to be both learners *and* leaders. That's a gift that will keep on giving.

In addition to giving gifts of money through this offering, the older children have created a prayer station that will be in coffee hour, where you and all the grown-ups will be able to add joys and concerns around the education of children.

We pray for children and youth because we know that God hears our prayers. We support children and youth with our gifts of money because we know that you all are an important part of our church today and will continue to be an important part of our church for your whole lives. Who knows how each of you will be nurtured by our church into leadership? I bet many of the adults in this sanctuary can think of a way that the church nurtured them to become leaders! *(look in your congregation for connections—pastors, educators, musicians, elders, Sunday school teachers or others who have been formed by these programs—share any stories that may be out there . . . or give a youth who went to triennium or an alum of the YAV program an opportunity to share a story or experience.)*

(If younger children made streamers, include a note to have them wave streamers during prayer, and/or give instructions for ways that they might be used in hymns, scripture readings, or prayers during the rest of the service)

Let's pray, and please repeat after me:

Loving God,
From the time we were very young,
To the time when we will be very old,
You have taught us—
through your word in Scripture
and through your leaders in our church.
As we proclaim your wondrous deeds,
May others be taught and encouraged, too.
Amen.

—Becky D'Angelo-Veitch, Certified Associate Christian Educator,
Director of Faith Formation at Third Presbyterian Church, Rochester, NY